DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 304 CG 030 721

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TITLE The Guidance Counselor and the Instructional Arena.
PUB DATE 2001-04-00
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Counselor Role; Curriculum Development; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Multiple Intelligences; *School Counseling; *School Counselors; Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

This document discusses the role of the guidance counselor in helping with the academic achievement of students. One way to do this is to instruct teachers and principals in some of the basic tenets from educational psychology that can help students feel more positive about themselves. Being unable to meet high curricular standards often leads to lowered self esteem in students. These tenets assist students in performing better in school as well as meeting important objectives in feeling more positive about the self. Counselors can also instruct teachers in the use of Multiple Intelligences Theory. This theory allows teachers to use the strengths of students in developing curricula. Being familiar with various recommended models of teaching and learning activities enables counselors to help teachers with instructional problems in the classroom. Guidance counselors have an important role in school curriculum improvement. They can be actively involved in informing teachers and principals of the recommended trends in education. These trends assist students in achieving more optimally as well as meeting their personal needs. (ADT)

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The Guidance Counselor and the Instructional Arena

by
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THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL ARENA

In an era of testing and measuring student achievement, tension and anxiety occur from both the student and the teacher. There is much pressure on students to pass exit tests in order to graduate from high school. If a student does not have a high school diploma, the future may indeed be bleak. Even if upon repeated testing, the student does pass the exit exam, the self concept is certainly involved if the student will/will not be in the passing category. Many states, too, are emphasizing that a student pass a state mandated test to be promoted to the next grade level.In Texas, students are tested in grades three through eight, and also in grade ten. This may become a pattern in the nation, since President George W. Bush, former Texas Governor, has strongly advocated these school years of testing for all students. Then too, standards continue to rise in different states, setting the bar higher for student passing of tests. In Virginia, only 2% passed the initial state mandated Standards of Learning Tests to be implemented fully by 2004. What might become an important additional role for the guidance counselor? (See Education Week, January 11, 2001).

Role of the Guidance Counselor in Teaching and Learning

When students consult with or are referred to the guidance counselor, instructional problems seem to be paramount. Students then have difficulties in coming to terms with meeting standards in the curriculum. They have uncertain feelings about themselves. Students here believe that they do not possess what it takes to be a successful learner. While schools should help to build the self concept of the student, higher standards and expectations may have the opposite affect. To be sure, the student should achieve as optimally as possible and feel challenge in the daily curriculum. But the expectations may be beyond what a student can reasonably well achieve. The guidance counselor needs to discuss with teachers and principals ways of assisting students to achieve well using principles of learning from educational psychology. These principles of learning should help students to do better in school work as well as in meeting important objectives in feeling more positive about the self.

Which tenets from educational psychology might the guidance counselor discuss with teachers and principals?

1. student interest in ongoing lessons and units of study need to be developed and maintained. If a student lacks interest, the chances are he/she will not be attending to what is being presented. Obtaining the attention of learners is vital in teaching and learning situations. A variety of interesting learning opportunities need to be in the offing. these activities assist students to achieve objectives more fully and at

CG030721

the same time increase the desire to learn more. Positive feelings should be a by product since successful learners tend to feel better about themselves.

2. student motivation for learning is important. With increased motivation, students possess a higher energy level for learning and achievement. An unmotivated student has little desire to learn in school and may wish the week end were here, or vacation time were to start. This is most unfortunate since motivation of students to achieve lesson objectives is possible. The teacher/principal need to think about and implement teaching strategies which motivate students to do as well as possible in each learning opportunity.

3. student purpose in learning is vital. He/she then needs to perceive the values of learning what is being presented in class. Accepting reasons for student engagement makes it increasingly possible achieve objectives of instruction. The inherent subject matter and skills become worthy to acquire by the learner. Teachers should take a small amount of time for each lesson to indicate to students the values of attaining that which is being presented.

4. student meaning is important for vocabulary, concepts, and generalizations being stressed. Merely memorizing content has little meaning to the student. Rather, the student needs to understand in depth what is being taught. Meaning theory needs to be in the repertoire of the teacher in teaching/learning situations. If students do not understand what is being taught, they may commit to memory items for testing purposes. These learnings may then soon be forgotten. Better it is if students attach meaning and truly understand knowledge and skills taught. More positive feelings about the self should be an end result.

5. student application of learnings acquired is salient. Thus, what has been learned is used in a variety of ways such as in problem solving. Retention of learnings is increased with use and application made of vital content and abilities. Then too, the student perceives significance in what is useful. Learners should definitely see how what is achieved is useful and utilitarian (Ediger, 1999, 233-240).

The above named five criteria for good teaching may be assessed on a five point Likert scale. Observers doing the assessing need to have training in using these common criteria. It is important to have a high degree of interscorer reliability from the assessors in the assessment process.

Using Multiple Intelligences Theory

Guidance counselors should have excellent knowledge of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. They may then assist teachers and school administrators to realize the significance of using this Theory.

Students do possess different abilities in a variety of knowledge/skills areas. Teachers need to use the strengths of students in ongoing lessons and units of study. A model which may be used here is Gardner's Theory (1993). These are the following:

1. verbal/linguistic such as the use of reading and writing skills. These are also useful in test taking.
2. visual/space which includes art products developed which may be incorporated in any curriculum area.
3. musical/rhythmic whereby what has been learned may be indicated with lyrics and musical notation.
4. logical/mathematical including thinking logically in different forms and kinds of reasoning.Those students who are especially strong in mathematics may reveal learnings through its diverse branches including arithmetic.
5. intrapersonal in which students prefer to work individually and show objectives achieved through individual endeavors.
6. interpersonal intelligences including showing knowledge and skills acquired through group or committee work
7. bodily/kinesthetic whereby what has been learned may be shown through physical prowess and athletic endeavors.
8. scientific whereby objective, scientific thinking is preferred. The academic discipline of science is also favored by these learners.

The above named model suggests a plethora of ways in which students may reveal what has been learned. Testing is one approach, #1 above, but there are numerous others. Number two emphasizes art work in any unit of study and related directly to the academic discipline being studied. Art projects include pencil sketching, water color illustrations, dioramas, murals, friezes, and construction activities. Number three incorporates music/dance into the curriculum. Poetry (lyrics) set to music may well be an important avenue for selected students to indicate what has been learned. Rhythmic (dance) activities emphasize diverse cultures involving people in various nations. Number four stresses the importance of reasoning and logical thinking pertaining to subject matter being considered in ongoing learning opportunities. The ability to think creatively and critically within a problem solving framework is valuable in school and in society. Number five incorporates those individuals who do best in individual endeavors whereas #6 pertains to individuals who achieve best in committees to show learnings acquired. Number seven incorporates individuals/committees showing what has been learned through the use of the fine and gross muscles. Physical endeavors are involved, not sedentary activities, as the most appropriate means of learning and achievement. Number eight above stresses objective thought which eliminates biases, prejudices, and flawed thought. Objective thinking is very prevalent in science, but also

in all other academic disciplines.

The theory of multiple intelligences indicates which knowledge/skills students do best in. It also indicates how students may best reveal what has been learned. Then too, the theory states how academic areas may be correlated and integrated. The strengths, not weaknesses, of students need to be used in developing the curriculum. They should also be used to prioritize the modes of choosing procedures of student evaluation in terms of what and how much has been learned. Teachers/school administrators need to ascertain the intelligence(s) possessed by learners with the intention of making their application in ongoing lessons and units of study; in curriculum design as to objectives, learning opportunities, ways of organizing the curriculum; in providing for individual differences; and in assessing achievement (See Ediger, 2000, 173-178).

The Guidance Counselor and Learning Styles Theory

The guidance counselor needs to possess numerous recommended models of teaching to assist teachers/administrators with instructional problems. Searson and Dunn (2001) have done extensive research in learning styles for students for many years. They provide excellent models for implementing learning styles theory into the classroom. Assisting students to achieve more optimally is important in Constructivist philosophy of instruction or to have students achieve high standards set by different states or provinces. Also, for its very own sake, it is important for each student to learn as much as possible. Students need to achieve as optimally as possible in school and in society. The research of Searson and Dunn (2001) have expressed important results in the following variables to assist learners to achieve:

1. environmental factors including sound or noise acceptable to the student, preferred temperature readings, as well as formal versus informal seating arrangements for students.
2. emotional elements including student motivation, persistence, responsibility, conformity versus nonconformity, and preferences for structure versus choice in terms of what to learn.
3. sociological factors including student preferences for studying alone or with others, and with a collegial versus more authoritarian method of learning.
4. physiological elements include perceptual strengths such as auditory, visual, tactual, and/or kinesthetic procedures, as well as intake needs such as snacking/eating and mobility or movement during studying.
5. psychological factors such as analytic learners focusing on specific facts and sequentially developing broader ideas, as compared to global students who desire to know how the content being pursued

relates to them personally, before focusing on facts. Analytic learners prefer abstract words and numerals as compared to globally orientated students preferring the semi-concrete (illustrations).

Learning theory advocates believe that the amount of achievement for any one student will depend upon how well the above named enumerated tenets are followed. Thus, for emotional factors, the degree of student motivation, persistence, and preference for learner choice versus a teacher determined curriculum in what is learned will make for more optimal achievement. Highly motivated students will achieve more that the less motivated as will the persistent learner achieve more than the non-persistent being. Selected students will have a plethora of choices to make in terms of learning opportunities to be pursued as compared to others who will desire to have a teacher determined curriculum (See Ediger, 2001, 13-17).

Variety of Learning Activities

The author recently assessed a Ph D thesis (S.Jeyaraj, 1998) for Madurai Kamaraj University the candidate made the following recommendations for teachers to assist optimal student achievement:

1. Pupils should see the relationship between the classroom and what transpires at the work place. Too frequently what is learned in the classroom has no perceived relationship with how knowledge is to be used.
2. Theory and practice need to be related to each other and not to be treated as separate entities. A hands on approach needs to be developed in teaching whereby an abstract theory is clarified in a utilitarian or hands on procedure in learning.
3. Diverse kinds of materials need to be used as activities and experiences so that students may effectively achieve relevant objectives of instruction. Thus, concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract learning opportunities should be in the offing.
4. memorization of subject matter without attached meaning makes for a lack of student interest in achievement, development, and growth in the academics. Meaning theory is of utmost importance in teaching and learning situations.
5. Learner based, not adult centered, instruction needs to be emphasized in the curriculum. It is the learner who needs to do the learning whereas the teacher's role is to teach so that the former is successful in attaining objectives of instruction.

Ediger (1995) described what student teachers and cooperating teachers need to advocate to assist learners in developing good attitudes.These include the following:

1. Assist pupils to become actively involved in learning.

Encourage students individually and collectively to pursue, accomplish, and attain worthwhile ends.

2. Show a caring attitude toward each pupil, not letting any one to fall through the cracks. If a pupil does not understand, take time to make certain that meaning is being achieved in an ongoing activity.

3. Accept each student as having immense worth and deserving respect.

4. Provide a learning environment conducive to meeting student's needs.

5. Recognize student capabilities and achievements and thus meet recognition needs of individual learners.

6. Provide a challenging environment in which students are intrinsically motivated to attain optimally.

There are numerous demands and responsibilities placed upon teachers to guide optimal learner achievement. School counselors may assist each teacher to become mindful of that which serves as guidelines to good teaching and learning situations. In an era of mandated state standards and high expectations for learner achievement, teachers with counselor encouragement may well provide a learning environment conducive to optimal pupil achievement. Testing students to notice achievement may be one way to observe achievement. Multiple assessment devices should also be used and these include the portfolio concept.

Portfolios emphasize using every day products/processes of students in developing a purposeful collection of entries for achievement evaluation. Students with teacher assistance may then place the following in the former's portfolio:

1. dated diary entries indicating what had been learned on a daily basis or logs kept on a weekly basis.

2. written summaries of learnings acquired in an ongoing unit of study.

3. recognized achievements/rewards received from the teacher/principal, or from others.

4. records of content acquired from multimedia used in the classroom such as video tapes, CD ROMS, Internet, world wide web, computer disks, among other audio-visual aids.

5. committee/cooperative learning interactions shown on a video-tape.

6. cassette tapes of selected oral reading and oral reports presented to the total class or to small groups of peers.

7. art work as it relates to ongoing units of study.

8. written work pertaining to narrative, expository, and creative products.

9. construction endeavors indicating related concepts and

generalizations studied in class.

10. snapshots of items which are too large to place into a portfolio (See Ediger, 2000, 244-249).

Portfolios provide opportunities for parents to observe and assess student products/processes involving daily work in the classroom.

Guidance counselors have an important role in school curriculum improvement. They need to be actively involved in informing teachers and principals of recommended trends in education. These trends assist students to achieve more optimally as well as meet personal needs of students. Many problems faced by students pertain to a lack of success in achieving objectives of instruction. The guidance counselor can be very instrumental in working toward improved teaching and learning situations in school.

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